

Listing of Claims

1. (Currently amended) Combination ablation and visualization apparatus for ablating cardiac tissue of a patient comprising:

an elongated body including a first end and a second end opposite to the first end;

first and second jaws carried at the first end and movable between a spaced-apart open position and a closed position, each jaw comprising an electrode for connection to a terminal of an RF energy generator for ablating cardiac tissue located between the jaws;

cl a dissecting member carried by the jaws for separating adjoining cardiac tissues to obtain access to or visualization of a selected epicardial surface, the dissecting member including at least one aperture being formed therein; and

a fluid pathway in fluid communication with the at least one aperture formed in the dissecting member and extending along ~~between the first and second ends of the body to the second end and terminating in at least one aperture at the first end~~ whereby fluid may be introduced through the apparatus to clear an operative field to enhance visualization of a site for ablation by the jaws.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the fluid pathway terminates in a plurality of apertures in the dissecting member through which fluid may flow from the apparatus.

3. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the dissecting member includes a distal tip to aid in dissection around the selected epicardial surface, the at least one aperture being formed in the distal tip of the dissecting member.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the fluid pathway is adapted to supply saline to the selected epicardial surface.

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cont.
5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising handle members carried at the second end and operatively connected to the jaws for opening and closing the jaws.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 5 wherein the apparatus has sufficient length such that, when ablation of the cardiac tissue is performed using a sub-xyphoid approach, the handle members are controllable outside the patient and the jaws and dissecting member extend to the proximity of the selected epicardial surface.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 further including an endoscope extending substantially along the length of the body for viewing the selected epicardial surface.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 further including a light source carried at the first end of the body.

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9. (New) The apparatus of claim 3 wherein a plurality of apertures are formed in the distal tip of the dissecting member and are located in spaced relation around the circumference of the distal tip, each aperture being in fluid communication with the fluid pathway.